

SPACE TONE CONTINUUM

Swart Super Space Tone 30 head and 2x12 cabinet

BY TERRY BUDDINGH

FOR MICHAEL SWART, amp design is an ongoing evolution. “Each new design builds upon, and is an extension of, my previous designs,” says Swart. Like most boutique amp builders, Swart started out small. Introduced four years ago, his first amp model, the aptly named Space Tone 6V6se, established the basic blueprint for his subsequent designs. Based on Fender’s late-Fifties tweed Princeton, it’s a compact combo with just two controls (volume and tone) and a single 6V6 output tube.

Responding to requests for more power and extra features, Swart raised the stakes with his second design, the Atomic Space Tone, by designing it on a pair of 6V6 output tubes and adding reverb and tremolo. Now comes the Super Space Tone 30, a vintage-styled amp with

In addition to kicking space-age styling into orbit, the head’s front and rear vents improve cooling and make it easy to change tubes.



matching cabinet that takes Swart’s designs to their next evolutionary step.

FEATURES

THE SUPER SPACE TONE 30 retains his previous amps’ simple single tone control preamp, but it jacks up the power with four cathode-biased 6V6s. (Alternately, the amp can run on a pair of EL34s.) It also has an additional gain stage before the main Princeton-style preamp, and this extra stage’s output gain can be selected via the Hi/Lo switch (Hi mode adds 10dB of gain; Lo mode is unity gain). With extra gain on tap and the EL34 option, the Super Space Tone 30 can stretch farther from its tweed roots than its predecessors—from burnished tweed to Brit grind. Thanks in a large part to the pair of Celestion G12M Greenback speakers enclosed in its matching cabinet, the amp can cover tones from both sides of the pond equally well.

Beneath its swingin’ space-age aesthetics, the Super Space Tone 30 is among the best-built amps on the boutique scene. Its turret-style component board is loaded with quality electronics, and all the wiring is carefully and neatly dressed. The gloss-black powder-coated finish on the welded aluminum chassis complements the gloss-black

Heyboer output transformer and top-mounted can-style electrolytic capacitors. Swart’s keen eye for style clearly extends beyond the amp’s exterior; inside and out, this is one of the coolest-looking amps around.

PERFORMANCE

THE SUPER SPACE TONE 30’s two input jacks function like those on a typical tweed

A pair of Celestion G12M Greenbacks give the amp’s tweed-derived circuitry some extra Brit-toned bite.



SWART SUPER SPACE TONE 30 HEAD & 2x12 CABINET

LIST PRICES: Super Space Tone 30 head, \$2,549.00; 2x12 cabinet, \$699.00

MANUFACTURER: Swart Amplifier Company, swartamps.com

POWER OUTPUT: 30–35 watts, depending on output tube type

CHANNELS: One

INPUTS: Hi and Lo

FEATURES: All-tube, cathode-biased output stage; no negative feedback; black powder-coated 12-gauge aluminum chassis; turret-terminal construction; Sprague and Tube Amp Doctor electrolytic capacitors; Mallory 150 and Mojo Dijon signal capacitors; CGE pots; carbon-comp resistors; cloth-covered wire; ceramic tube sockets; three-spring Accutronics reverb tank; Heyboer transformers

CONTROLS: Volume, Hi/Lo gain switch, Tone, Master Volume, Space (reverb), and Tremolo Speed and Depth

CABINET: Finger-jointed pine, with black lacquered tweed covering

TUBE COMPLEMENT: Three JJ ECC 83S/12AX7 tubes (preamp, tremolo and phase-splitter), one JJ ECC 832/12DW7 tube (reverb send and return), four Electro-Harmonix 6V6 GT output tubes (also accepts two EL34s), one JJ GZ34S rectifier tube

TWO-BUTTON FOOTSWITCH: Space (reverb) and Tremolo on/off (included)

SPEAKER CABINET: Finger-jointed pine, open back, with black lacquered tweed covering

SPEAKERS: Two 16-ohm Celestion G12M Greenback 12s, wired in parallel

POWER HANDLING: 50 watts

or blackface Fender amp: the Lo input simply attenuates the input level more than the Hi input. Plugging a Strat into the Lo input, with the gain switch set to Lo, the master volume set high, and with the amp loaded with 6V6s, the Super Space Tone 30 gushed with some of the richest and warmest clean tones I’ve heard, with tons of headroom, too. Think of two Fender tweed Deluxes side by side and you’ll start to get the picture. Then, imagine how a pair of Celestion G12M Greenbacks in a resonant pine cabinet would enhance the 6V6’s inherently thick texture with some extra midrange texture and stringy detail.

Turning the tone knob counterclockwise emphasized the characteristic dark and burnished tweed voice, a tone that engulfed each note with a rich thickness that begged for some uptown jazzy Wes Montgomery octave excursions. Cranking the tone knob in the other direction encouraged some finger-lickin’ chicken-pickin’ sweetness. The Swart’s reverb reminded me of a vintage Ampeg’s; it was smoother and richer than what you get with a typical blackface Fender. The output-tube-modulating tremolo circuit imparted a pleasing plumpness to its undulations, as well.

After I’d swapped out the 6V6s for a pair of EL34s and inserted my guitar in the Hi input, the tone began to crunch and grind as I pushed up the volume. While the amp adopted a stronger British accent with the EL34s, its robust midrange was more reminiscent of a vintage Orange head than a classic Marshall tone—which should not be too surprising, considering that the Super Space Tone 30’s phase-inverter circuit is more like Orange’s.

THE BOTTOM LINE

THE NAME MAY BE NEW to most folks, but from the carefully packed custom shipping cartons to the meticulous lead dress of every wire, it’s clear that Swart is serious about becoming a major player in the boutique amp battlefield. These hip designs are not only built with an eye for style but also fine-tuned for gorgeous tone. ✨



PRO	CON
SUPER-RICH TWEED-VOICED TONES WITH EXTRA GAIN, LUSCIOUS REVERB AND STRONG TREMOLO; TRANSCENDING RETRO STYLING	EXPENSIVE; SINGLE TONE CONTROL PROVIDES LIMITED TONAL FLEXIBILITY